TRANSFORMANCE
MUSIC GROUP

HIP HOP
PRODUCTION

WITH GARAGEBAND FOR iPAD

BEN SELLERS

> *"Hip-hop, the dominant turn-of-the-century pop form, gives the most electrifying demonstration of technology's empowering effect. The genre rose up from desperately impoverished high rise ghettos, where families couldn't afford to buy instruments for their kids and even the most rudimentary music-making seemed out of reach. But music was made all the same: the phonograph itself became an instrument. In the South Bronx in the 1970s, DJs like Afrika Bambaataa, and Grandmaster Flash used turntables to create a hurtling collage of effects—loops, breaks, beats, scratches. Later, studio-bound DJs and producers used digital sampling to assemble some of the most densely packed sonic assemblages in musical history"* — Alex Ross, Listen to This (2010)
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> *Hip hop 'lets ordinary people express ideas they care about in language they can relate to, put to music they can dance to.'* - History of Hip hop (1981)

Introduction

It is not unlikely that hip hop has been towards the periphery of your musical world until now. It is, however the biggest selling genre of music in the world, and forms a central part of many a young person's musical world. Fortunately for us as music teachers, hip hop's roots in funk, soul, jazz and blues allows us to cover plenty of the theoretical ground demanded by our curricula while simultaneously offering unique composition and performance opportunities to our pupils. This teaching guide provides the basic information you need to contextualise hip hop music in your classroom, as well as links to videos that provide a wealth of additional information.

We have chosen to focus on hip hop not only due to its popularity and ability to engage students, but also because the iPad is ideally suited to its production. Garageband allows us to recreate many of the key elements of the music: samples, synthesisers and drum machines, vocal and instrumental effects and an ability to create arrangements in real time.

As always, we recommend completing the project yourself before delivering it to students, and in the later stages of the project feel free to bring in additional elements into the compositional process, for example incorporating acoustic instruments, additional vocals or topics for lyrics. We would also love to hear the musical results of the project - do email us a link to your soundcloud page if you have a moment!

What is Hip Hop?

Hip Hop is not just a musical genre, but a complete sub-culture that encompasses turntablism (manipulating records), MCing (rapping), dance and graffiti art. It was developed in South Bronx, an African-American area of New York, in the 1970s as a positive alternative to gang culture.

For a full and fascinating guide to hip hop, watch some or all of of this three part Channel 4 documentary 'The Hip Hop Years' (each episode lasts 50 minutes)
Part 1
Part 2
Part 3

If you are short on time, this 10 minute video provides a more succinct overview, and a suitable introduction for your students (the full documentary contains explicit images).

Afrika Bambaataa

Elements of Hip-Hop Music

We cover many of the key elements of hip hop music over the course of the project. **Sampling** is the art of taking elements of other songs (originally from records) and using it in a new composition. Djs were also known for their **scratching** and **effects**. When it came to creating original material, **drum machines** and **synthesisers** were more often than not the instruments of choice, sometimes augmented by electro-acoustic and acoustic instruments. **MCing**, or **rapping** has its origins in announcements made by 'masters of ceremony' at parties, and developed into a central focus of the genre.

Hip hop usually make use of of very **simple chord progressions**, sometimes building from a single chord throughout the song. The skill of a hip hop producer is in the tension and release created within the beat, the web of **shifting textures** (often made up of multiple samples and effects) and the **production qualitie**s (timbre, EQing) of each instrument.

Hip hop 'crews' are usually made up of one or more producers, MCs, instrumentalists and vocalists.

Keeping hip hop positive

Yes, lots of contemporary hip hop is misogynistic, sweary and references drugs and violence. It is also true that, unlike when studying other genres, I don't suggest that my students explore youtube to find songs they particularly like within the genre. These two facts should not stop us from engaging with a genre that was created as an alternative to drugs and gang violence, and whose most talented exponents still use their music as a tool for social struggle and racial emancipation. I have found that if this discussion is had early on in the project and reinforced by the examples in each lesson (carefully chosen to focus on the positive side of hip hop), pupils use the creative opportunity that composing affords to demonstrate their maturity and grasp of the topic. If this sounds too challenging, keep the music instrumental!

How to deliver the course

+ Each of the five **lesson plans** contains three exercises- a listening exercise, a playing exercise and a creative task. They also include all the listening links for the session.

+ The optional performance project detailed at the end of the teaching guide outlines how to take pupils' individual compositions and turn them into ensemble performance pieces.

+ The accompanying **walkthrough videos**, (password: *grandmasterflash*) guide pupils through the iPad-based tasks. Note: the walkthrough videos focus on the practical tasks, and do not include details of the warm-ups. Teachers should use the lesson plans as a guide to the overall structure of the session.

+ This **Teaching Guide** offers concise and relevant definitions and elaborations on some of the concepts and wider cultural themes covered in the lesson plans, keeping you one step ahead of your most enquiring students!

Curriculum

This unit is closely aligned to the UK Key Stage 3 National Curriculum. The following aspects of it are covered in the five sessions:

"Pupils should be taught to:

+ Understand musical structures, styles, genres and traditions,

+ Listen with increasing discrimination and awareness to inform their practice as musicians.

+ Use technologies appropriately and appreciate and understand a wide range of musical contexts and styles.

+ Extend and develop musical ideas by drawing on a range of musical structures, styles, genres and traditions

+ Identify and use the inter-related dimensions of music expressively and with increasing sophistication, including use of tonalities, different types of scales and other musical devices.

*+ Listen with increasing discrimination to a wide range of music from great composers and musicians*

+ develop a deepening understanding of the music that they perform and to which they listen, and its history"

- **Key Stage 3 (Ages 11 - 14) 2014 UK National Curriculum for Music**

Assessment

Pupils can be assessed over the course of the project by combining the learning outcomes of each lesson with the radar diagram below* (a printable copy is available at the end of the guide).

The six spokes on the diagram can be understood as 'themes' of learning. Each learning outcomes addresses one or more spokes, so over the course of the project each spoke is covered multiple times, allowing opportunities for progression.
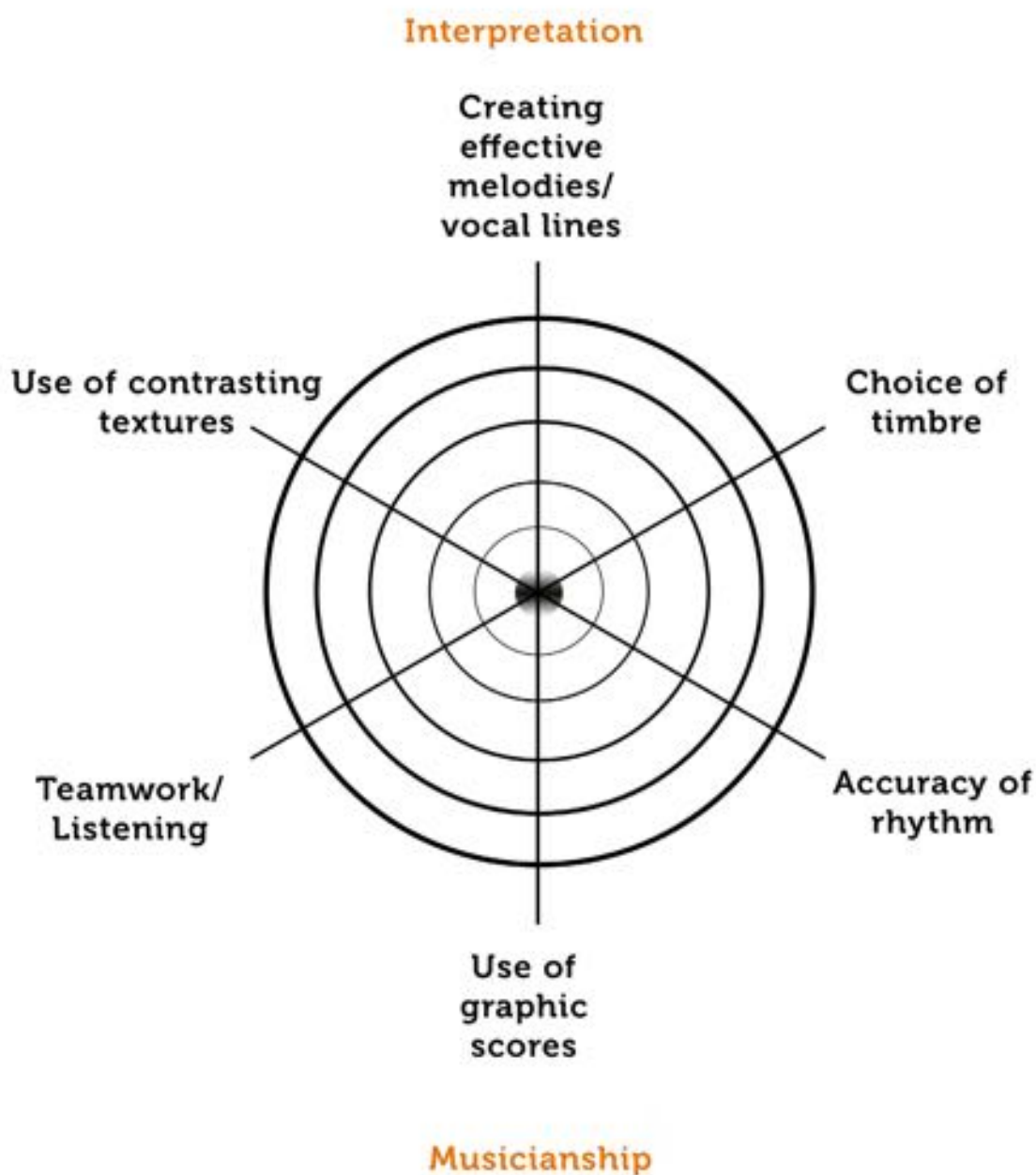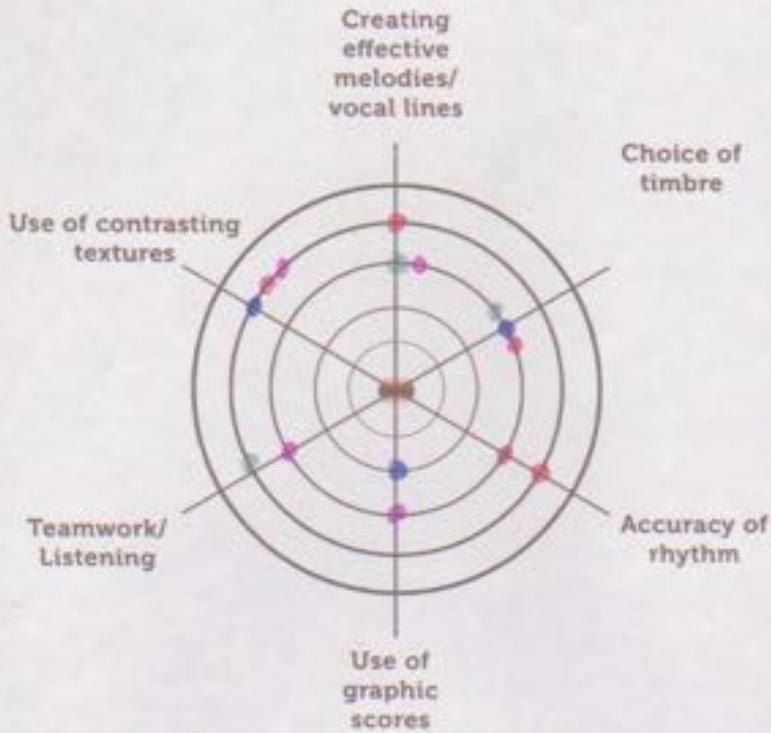

I am very much indebted to blog posts from Jane Werry and John Kelleher for the concept of radar diagrams, and how they can best be used. This post from Jane offers invaluable information on how to maximise the diagrams' function as a tool for pupil improvement whilst minimising additional time needed for summative assessment.

HIP HOP PRODUCTION: ASSESSMENT SHEET

Dates: 4/11 11/11 25/11 2/12

Creating effective melodies/vocal lines

Choice of timbre

Use of contrasting textures

Accuracy of rhythm

Teamwork/Listening

Use of graphic scores

Name _Naarah P._   Class _9C_

Feedback:

Think again about ending – are you following score?

Great clave!

Perhaps try the same melody an octave higher?

Continue next time

Excellent vocal line. Well done!

As shown above, the teacher can add 'dots' to each spoke to indicate a level each criteria (1 is low, 5 is high) and add comments. Different colours denote different lessons, offering a clear indication of improvement. They can be used for self-directed learning, as well as a basis for conversations with the teacher about how higher levels can be achieved.

Assessment examples from session 1:

Learning Outcome: 'Use a graphic score as stimulus for an arrangement'.

Score	Notes
0	Did not attempt
1	Minimal link between graphic score and arrangement.
3	Arrangement mostly followed score, with occasional deviations. Use of an extended introduction verbally explained.
5	Graphic score enhanced with further instruments and followed exactly during recording.

Example B - Use production effects to create tension and release

Score	Notes
0	Did not attempt
1	Use of effects sounds random; pupil unable to explain musical decisions.
3	Individual effects used to emphasise downbeat.
5	Combinations of effects used to create tension before final bass entry.

The spokes addressed in each learning objective are indicated in the lesson plans:

Tex – Use of contrasting textures
Tim – Choice of timbre
Sc – Use of graphic scores
Team – Teamwork/Listening
Rhy – Rhythm
Mel – Composing effective melodies/vocal lines

If summative assessment is necessary, the highest point scores from each spoke can be added up to create an overall mark out of 30 and graded accordingly.

Additional resources

Films

A History of Hip Hop - A ten minute news report from 1981 offering a fascinating glimpse at hip hop as it began to enter the mainstream.

Style wars - One of the earliest studies of the world of graffiti, breaking and rapping. While the main focus is on the graffiti writers, this film offers a glimpse at the aesthetic of the early days of hip hop. Includes performanes from important figures in hip hop, includingthe Sugarhill Gang and Grandmaster Flash

Important recordings

Newcleus - Jam on it- Contains many of elements discussed above, including a synthesised drum beat, melody and bassline and vocals speeded up for chipmunk effect.

Grandmaster Flash - Beat Street- One of the first records to use the 808 drum machine (very similar to Garageband's 'classic drum machine') and turntable scratching.